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Report on the Federal Civil Defense Administration's Youth Conference

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I attended a two day conference regarding civil defense and its relationship to youth organizations on July 13 and 14, 1956, in Battle Creek, Michigan. For the most part the first day was briefing on the aspects of civil defense and the second day was discussion of youth organizations and what they could do for civil defense. I will try mainly to present how I believe 4-H might assist in this program.

The Civil Defense Administration is set up to aid the people in times of war and natural disasters. The range of their activities is broad and include such things as detection of imminent attacks or disasters, warning, evacuation, public education regarding civil defense, rescue and first aid, and the care of evacuees. I would again like to stress that this is for natural disasters as well as war.

War is something that most of us would rather not think about, but nevertheless it is just as much a possibility today as it has been in the past. Therefore, we should be prepared for it and fervently hope that our preparation will keep us from ever being in one. As you have probably read many times before, if a war were to come today the whole world would be the battlefield and no one could feel that he were out of danger. Therefore, as 4-H'ers, who for the most part live in rural areas, we cannot say that an attack upon the U. S. would not affect us. On the contrary, we could be affected in many ways.

First of all, there is the possible effect of having millions of evacuees from the cities moved to our rural areas. It is not difficult to imagine the chaos that would develop if thousands of people were dumped on a small rural community. Food and clothing would be used at a tremendous rate and lodging, medical services, and sanitation facilities would have to be provided. If some system could not be put into effect to provide these things I am afraid the consequences that could be caused by these evacuees could be extremely serious. Law and order would become hard to maintain.

Secondly, the area covered by a radioactive fall out is tremendous and could not help but effect hundreds of rural communities.

Thirdly, an enemy plane traveling thousands of miles is not going to take a bomb back home with him if he can't get to his target. In other words, rural communities have the chance of getting hit by randomly dropped bombs or possibly bombs released in the wrong place by error. These are just some of the ways that an attack would effect us in rural communities.

I believe that 4-H is helping with civil defense in many ways at the present through its normal program. It helps in the production of food and could continue to do even more in times of an emergency. First aid and safety training is also often given in 4-H. Leadership and cooperation are developed in 4-H and are characteristics which would be greatly needed in times of stress.

Even though 4-H is helping within its regular program, possibly it could do even more in the line of civil defense. Probably informing members about civil defense would be the easiest thing that could be done. The Federal Civil Defense Administration, (FCDA), has movies, pamphlets, posters, speakers, etc. A local club should be able to get such material through the county or state civil defense director or if they couldn't get it there for some reason, they could get it from the FCDA National Headquarters, Battle Creek, Michigan. We were informed at the meeting that Mr. Val Peterson, Director of the FCDA, would be available to speak at national conventions of youth organizations if contacted at least six months before they convened. We were also told that the FCDA had an exhibit that could be displayed at national meetings. The FCDA would pay the transportation costs for the exhibit but would expect free floor space and help in setting it up.

Another way 4-H might help, would be to encourage local clubs to contact their local or county civil defense director and ask if there was something their local 4-H club could do.

As I see it, one of the biggest responsibilities of 4-H and all other clubs functioning in rural areas is the preparation for the receiving of evacuees. Unfortunately, I am not aware of very many practical ways that 4-H might help. One possibility would be the addition of a project for older girls in preparation of meals for a large group. This could also have a lot of value besides being training for preparing meals for thousands of homeless evacuees. Possibly such a project is already in the program in some places.

Much of the work in receiving evacuees would have to be done at the time of an evacuation. Therefore, a club interested in helping in such an undertaking should contact the local or county civil defense director before such an activity becomes necessary. Possibly he could assign tentative tasks or perhaps he would want the club to make a survey within its membership of the facilities that could be used in such a program.

Basic training in rescue and first aid might fit in some programs. It would depend on whether there was a person in the community who was interested and qualified to give instruction in rescue and first aid and whether the members would be interested receiving such training. Tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, wrecks, etc. are no respecters of political boundaries and quite often occur some distance from an agency set up to deal with them. Therefore, in the interim before their arrival, a person or persons trained in rescue and first aid might be of very valuable assistance. Local personnel of the fire or police departments or the civil defense office should be willing to give such instructions.

At the conference, we were shown instruments for the detection and measuring of radioactive materials. The FCDA will lend instruments to organizations if they will train people how to use them. These people would then act as monitors in the aftermath of an attack. I don't believe, however, that this particular program would fit into 4-H too well unless someone with some knowledge of radioactivity was interested enough to help a club.

Fire prevention and protection are or should already be a part of the farm safety project.. This project might be enlarged a little to include some material on civil defense. At least it could be stated that many of the objectives of the project also apply to civil defense. Older boys in a club might be trained in fire fighting. If an attack did come, outlying areas from the blast would be covered with fires and fire departments would have more than they could handle. If a person's home or barn was on fire, most likely if any one was going to put it out it would be he and his family.

In short, I think the possible parts that 4-H could play in civil defense would be these:

1. Encourage local clubs to consult with their local or county civil defense director.
2. Encourage the relaying of information concerning civil defense. This would include movies, talks, magazine articles, tours of defense installations, etc.
3. The addition or revision of projects concerning civil defense. For example, preparation and serving of meals for large groups, farm safety, rescue and first aid.

Mrs. Jean Wood Fuller, Director of Women's Activities FCDA, was the hostess for the youth conference and any inquiries concerning the meeting should be sent to her at Battle Creek, Michigan.

The conference convinced me that the youth of America can and should help in the defense of our country, and I hope that this report will be a step, however small, in that direction.





